
4. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 of the Draft EIR analyzes the potential impacts of the proposed projects on a range of environmental issue areas. Sections 4.2 through 4.10 describe the focus of the analysis, references and other data sources for the analysis, the environmental setting as it relates to the specific issue, project-specific impacts and mitigations measures, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project for each issue area. The format of each of these sections is described below.

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Under CEQA, a significant effect is defined as a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in the environment (Public Resources Code § 21068). The Guidelines implementing CEQA direct that this determination be based on scientific and factual data. The specific criteria for determining the significance of a particular impact are identified within the impact discussion in each section and are consistent with significance criteria set forth in the CEQA Guidelines.

INITIAL STUDY

The Vista Oaks and Highlands Parcel A Initial Study prepared for the proposed projects (Appendix C of the Draft EIR) includes a detailed environmental checklist addressing a range of technical environmental issues. For each of the issues, the Initial Study identifies the level of impact for the proposed projects. The Initial Study identifies the environmental effects as either “no impact,” “less-than-significant,” “potentially significant with mitigation incorporated,” or “potentially significant.” The Initial Study provided the following conclusions:

The Initial Study found that the proposed projects would have no impact on the following environmental issue:

Agricultural Resources

The proposed project area has not been identified as prime farm or agricultural lands, nor is the land currently being used for agricultural production.

The Initial Study found that the proposed projects would result in the following less-than-significant impacts which would not require mitigation:

Mineral Resources

The Rocklin General Plan Update EIR (1991) indicates that the State Geologist has not classified any mineral areas as existing within the planning area of the General Plan (p. 86).

Population and Housing

The proposed Vista Oaks General Plan Amendment would relocate the existing boundaries between the areas designated Recreation/Conservation (R-C) and Low Density Residential (LDR) and remove the Rural Residential (RR) designation from the site. The proposed Highlands Parcel A General Plan Amendment would redesignate the majority of that project site from LDR to RR. The Vista Oaks and Highlands Parcel A Initial Study found that residential densities resulting from project implementation would not exceed the residential density rate allowed by the Rocklin General Plan. Nor would the proposed projects displace substantial numbers of existing housing units or people from the project sites, because none currently exist.

Recreation

The Vista Oaks project site would include approximately 58 acres of passive parkland and approximately 1.5 acres of active parkland, thereby satisfying the General Plan parkland standard of five acres per 1,000 population. Regarding the proposed Vista Oaks and Highlands Parcel A subdivisions, the Initial Studies found that the project would not significantly increase the use of existing recreational facilities such that substantial deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. Additionally, the applicant would pay park and recreation fees as required by the City's subdivision ordinance. The proposed projects would not be expected to contribute to significant deterioration of existing park facilities, nor would recreation-related construction activities associated with the proposed projects result in adverse environmental impacts.

The Initial Study found that the proposed projects would result in the following significant impacts that would be mitigated to less-than-significant levels:

Hazards and Hazardous Material

The residents of the proposed subdivisions would not be involved in the routine use or transport of hazardous materials. The project area does not contain hazardous materials sites and is not located in the vicinity of any airport or airstrip. The projects do not involve any existing roads other than the terminus of China Garden Road, and Monument Springs Drive, and therefore, the City's existing emergency response plans would not be expected to suffer adverse effects from project implementation. In addition, the Vista Oaks and Highlands Parcel A Initial Study found that the proposed projects could expose people to risk of wildland fires beyond existing conditions, but identified a mitigation measure to assure that the risk is less-than-significant. Please see the Initial Study in Appendix C of this Draft EIR for the complete text of this mitigation measure.

Because conditions of project approval will include this mitigation measure, there is no need to include a discussion of this subject matter in the Draft EIR.

Public Services

An increase in the need for public services is anticipated with the proposed projects; however, mitigation measures would ensure that adequate public services and safety are provided. The Initial Study for these projects notes that mitigation measures would be required by the Rocklin Fire Department for the projects. The mitigation measures state that the project applicant shall comply with the provisions of the Uniform Fire Code; adequate emergency vehicle access shall be provided to the open space areas as required by the Rocklin Fire Department; where residential structures are developed, all portions of the exterior first floor shall be within one hundred fifty (150) feet of the public right-of-way; the projects shall comply with the City of Rocklin construction tax; and, an Open Space Management Plan shall be prepared by the project applicants and approved by the City of Rocklin prior to recording of any final maps for the projects. Please see the Initial Study in Appendix C for the complete Mitigation Measure VII-1. Because conditions of project approval will include this mitigation measure, there is no need to include a discussion of this subject matter in the Draft EIR.

Utilities and Service Systems

The proposed projects would require the construction and installation of stormwater and wastewater facilities on the project sites. The impacts related to the physical construction of these facilities are discussed in this EIR in the various resource sections such as Hydrology and Water Quality. Additionally, impacts could result if facilities were insufficient to meet the needs of the project; however, mitigation measures to ensure adequate systems would ensure that adequate systems are provided. The mitigation measures are identified in the Initial Study (Appendix C). Because conditions of project approval will include this mitigation measure, there is no need to include a discussion of this subject matter in the Draft EIR.

ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THIS EIR

The Initial Study identified various environmental issues as potentially significant, requiring further analysis. Consistent with the conclusions of the Initial Study, the following primary environmental issues are addressed in this chapter of the EIR:

- Land Use;
- Aesthetics;
- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Geology;
- Biological Resources;
- Transportation/Circulation;

- Air Quality;
- Noise; and
- Cultural Resources

THE TIERING CONCEPT

CEQA provides a number of processes for allowing lead agencies to supplement previously prepared plan- or zoning-level environmental analyses at the project level of decision-making while at the same time avoiding redundant and duplicative analysis. One, which applies in this case, is the concept of “tiering.” (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21083, 21094; CEQA Guidelines, § 15152.) CEQA Guidelines section 15152 provides the rules under which future site-specific approvals may be narrowed after a “first tier” EIR has been prepared. For example, where a first tier EIR has “adequately addressed” the subject of cumulative impacts, such impacts need not be revisited in second- and/or third-tier documents. Furthermore, second and third tier documents may limit the examination of effects to those that “were not examined as significant effects” in the prior EIR or “[a]re susceptible to substantial reduction or avoidance by the choice of specific revisions in the project, the imposition of conditions, or other means.”

The City of Rocklin has prepared several “first tier” environmental document that have contemplated the projects’ or similar projects’ development, including the following:

- Final Environmental Impact Report, City of Rocklin Plan – 1991, dated February 1991.
- Final Environmental Impact Report for the Rocklin Circulation Element Update – Southeast Rocklin Area, dated July 1988.
- EIR Addendum, Rocklin Circulation Element Update – Southeast Rocklin Area, dated December 1988.
- Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, Rocklin Circulation Element Update – Southeast Rocklin Area, dated May 1992.
- Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, Rocklin Circulation Element Update – Southeast Rocklin Area, dated January 1993.

To at least some degree, the City of Rocklin has relied on these first tier environmental documents as a starting point for analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed Vista Oaks and Highlands Parcel A Subdivision projects.

SECTION FORMAT

Each section in Chapter 4 addresses a specific environmental issue, as displayed in the title bar, and begins with an introduction describing the purpose of the section. This is followed by a description of the project setting as it pertains to that particular issue. The setting description is followed by the regulatory context and the impacts and mitigation measures discussion. This discussion contains the significance criteria, followed by the method of analysis. The impact and mitigation portion of this discussion includes impact

statements prefaced by a number in bold-faced type. An explanation of each impact and an analysis of its significance follow each impact statement. All mitigation measures pertinent to each individual impact follow directly after the impact statement (see below). The degree of relief provided by identified mitigation measures is also evaluated. An example of the format is shown below:

4.xI-1 Statement of Impact

Impact discussions for the proposed projects are in paragraph format.

Statement of *level of significance* of impact prior to mitigation is included at the end of each impact discussion.

Mitigation Measure(s)

Statement of *level of significance* after the mitigation is included immediately preceding mitigation measures.

4.xMM-1a Recommended mitigation measure(s) presented in italics and numbered in consecutive order.

4.xMM-1b Mitigation Measure

Endnotes are provided in most chapters. Numeric notations are made in the text of the chapter, indicating a reference to a document used to prepare this EIR. The endnote page then appears on the last page of each section.